United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Forty-seventh session of General Assembly begins general debate; hears addresses by Presidents of United States, Nicaragua, Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Prime Minister of Norway; and Foreign Ministers of Morocco, Brazil, Austria, Seychelles, Iran and Finland.

+ Security Council contends Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) can not automatically hold United Nations membership of former Socialist Republic; recommends that General Assembly deny Federal Republic participation in its work and that it require application for membership.

+ Humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo resumes today as agreement between three parties in Bosnian conflict is reached on ensuring security of humanitarian operations throughout region.

+ UNDP helicopter carrying six crew members on their way to Luanda crashes in Angola; three people hospitalized in Windhoek.

+ Extraordinary session of European Community's General Affairs Council, held at Headquarters today, welcomes positive result of French referendum endorsing Maastricht Treaty on European Union.

+ United Nations official says credentials from "so-called" Haitian Government in Port au Prince to attend forty-seventh session of General Assembly are of "no legal consequence to United Nations"

+ General Conference of International Atomic Energy Agency begins annual session.

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Opening the general debate of the General Assembly's 47th session this morning, Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs Celso Lafer, stressed the Organization's role in ushering a new international era of cooperation and praised the Secretary General's "provocative and creative" Agenda for Peace proposals.

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The Brazilian Foreign Minister told the Assembly that the United Nations and the General Assembly should serve "as a natural point of convergence for the tendencies that shape the complexities of our time". Such complexities, he said, required building a new international order, based on the democratic participation of all States.

Referring to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which his country hosted last June, Mr. Lafer urged the Assembly to adopt "the spirit of Rio" and called on the Assembly to address the task of implementing the conclusions and honouring the commitments taken at the Rio Conference. He urged the developed countries to announce their plans in support of the goals of the Conference, citing the availability of technology to developing countries as one crucial goal, as well as follow-up measures including the development of small island States and the convening of a negotiating committee on desertification.

The Brazilian Foreign Minister welcomed the decision to establish a Commission on Sustainable Development and announced his country's offer to host a centre for the study of sustainable development.

Welcoming Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace" report and calling upon all Assembly members to take steps to advance that agenda, United States President George Bush proposed in his address that a special meeting of the Security Council be held to discuss specific proposals in the Secretary-General's report.

Mr. Bush suggested that such a meeting develop concrete responses to the report in a number of key areas, including training on a national level of military units for possible peace-keeping operations and humanitarian relief; coordinated training of multi-national units to serve in such operations linked with regional organizations; adequate logistical support for peace-keeping and humanitarian operations; planning, crisis management and intelligence capabilities for such operations; and adequate, equitable financing for United Nations and associated peace-keeping efforts.

President Bush said that as much as the Organization had done with regard to peace-keeping, the United Nations could "do much more". He stressed the need for the regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), among others, to develop peace-keeping capabilities. Enhanced United Nations capabilities, however, were a "necessary complement" to these regional efforts across the globe, Mr. Bush noted.

The United States President told the Assembly that he had directed the United States Secretary of Defence to place a new emphasis on peace-keeping, and the United States would enhance training of combat, engineering and logistical units for peace-keeping and humanitarian activities. He had also directed the establishment of a permanent peace-keeping curriculum in U.S. military schools, proposed to make available American bases and facilities for multinational training and field exercices.

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President Bush further urged the Security Council to become a "key forum" for non-proliferation enforcement, reassuring the non-nuclear States that it will seek immediate action to provide assistance, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, to any State party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty that is a victim of an act of aggression involving nuclear weapons.

He announced his intention to work with the United States Congress towards redirecting the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's focus on providing technical support for nonproliferation, weapons monitoring and destruction, and global defense conversion.

Stressing a new approach to foreign aid, President Bush announced his intention to propose a top-to-bottom overhaul of the American institutions that plan and administer foreign assistance, and expressed his support for a significant increase in the programs of the Export-Import Bank to ensure that United States products and technology promote investment in worldwide economic growth. President Bush also announced that, using existing foreign affairs resources, he will propose the establishment of a $1-billion growth fund to provide grants and credits to support domestic businesses "in providing expertise, goods and services" needed in countries undertaking economic restructuring.

In her address to the Assembly, the President of Nicaragua, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, called attention to "major contradictions which had arisen in the world order", including the expectation that improvement in the relations between the East and West would bring a peace dividend. That, she said, had not yet been realized. She stressed the urgency to forge a worldwide consensus and commitment to strengthen international cooperation and reactivate economic growth and development.

The restructuring of the United Nations in the economic and social fields was of major importance to Nicaragua, she said, adding that her country welcomed the Secretary-General's action to improve coordination within the primary components of the United Nations system.

Turning to the challenges faced by her Government, the Nicaraguan President called for the economic support of the international community, citing this year's "terrible natural disasters" such as the Cerro Negro volcano eruption and the recent tidal wave.

Mr. Chamorro also told the Assembly that the chances of ensuring stability and promoting reconciliation and economic growth in Nicaragua were greater today than two and a half years ago. She pointed to her country's success in establishing peace and building democracy after many years of civil war-- disarming 24,000 members of the resistance; reducing the army from 96,000 to 17,000 men; establishing disarmament brigades for the entire country and collecting weapons which were in the hands of civilians.

The Foreign Minister of Austria, Alois Mock, told the Assembly that his country was fully committed to supporting Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his "An Agenda for Peace" report. The peace-keeping operations

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should imply more than a mere observation of cease-fire situations. They should play a major role in the prevention of conflicts, he said.

Speaking about the present conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Mr. Mock recalled the regional and international initiatives taken by the world community to try and bring a peaceful end to the ethnic confrontations in the region. What was needed, he said, was to keep serious pressure on the aggressor to desist from his acts of violation of international law, in particular humanitarian law and the Convention on Genocide.

Mr. Mock also denounced the "horrible effects" of ethnic cleansing and stressed that the international community will have to do more than care for refugees and displaced persons. "Our goal is for them to be able to return to their homes and to regain their belongings", he said.

Mr. Mock also informed the General Assembly that the long-standing controversy between his country and Italy concerning the protection of the Austrian population in South-Tyrol had been recently settled between the two Governments by the signing of an agreement on a package containing a number of measures benefitting the populations from that area.

The Austrian Foreign Minister further expressed the satisfaction of his Government at hosting the World Conference on Human Rights scheduled to convene in Vienna next June. The convenning of such an important event, he noted, highlighted his country's dedication to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In his address to the Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco, Abdellatif Filali, welcomed the new approach to the Middle East problem "amid positive and hopeful signs". The fact that the Arab-Israeli dialogue had started in Madrid last year was in itself a positive and constructive step in the peace process and Morocco was hopeful that the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and of the principle of exchanging land for peace could lead to a just and lasting solution in the area.

Speaking about the question of Western Sahara, Mr. Filali underlined that the problem had entered its final stage following the adoption by the United Nations of a peace plan in 1988 and the establishment of the cease-fire in September 1991. Despite the numerous delays which had interfered with the holding of the Referendum -- delays that Morocco deplored -- Mr. Filali reiterated his country's commitment to remain "firmly loyal" to the settlement plan for the region. The Moroccan Government extended its full cooperation to the establishment of the mechanisms envisaged and the implementation of the agreed rules with a view to organizing the Referendum as soon as possible, he concluded.

Opening this afternoon meeting, the President of Colombia, Cesar Gaviria Trujillo stressed that his country was a victim of the uncontrolable appetite for drugs throughout the world. Drug trafficking, however, was an international crime that threatened mankind in every corner of the planet, he

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said. President Gaviria pointed out that over the past two years much progress had been accomplished in the struggle against drug trafficking and drug dealing. All this progress, although real, was not enough, he added.

He called for the strengthening of international cooperation in the struggle against drug trafficking, "this ennemy of humanity", and appealed to the United Nations to establish global, regional and national levels for drug-controlling. The international community must commit itself to reduce the supply and demand of drugs at least by 50 per cent by the year 2000, by 70 per cent by the year 2005 and to free the humanity of this scourge by the year 2010.

President Gaviria also called for the improvement of the available instruments of judicial cooperation among nations. He suggested the creation of a United Nations Convention for judicial cooperation in the struggle against drugs which would facilitate the flow and exchange of evidence and reduce the bureaucratic stands and legal obstacles in the coordination of legal action between these countries.

Acknowledging the efforts of the United Nations to achieve peace and provide humanitarian assistance under very difficult circumstances, the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegovic, reminded the Assembly that his country was besieged by "barbaric aggression" and called on the Organization to "implement and enforce fully" the Security Council resolutions and the principles and commitments of the London Conference.

The Bosnian President pointed out that while his country had abiden by the "Confidence, Security Building and Verification" agreement of the London Conference, the aggressors had not. He accused the Belgrade Government and its "proxies" in Bosnia and Herzegovina of a "record of broken promises", saying such action had shown that implementation and enforcement must become the next step towards peace. He called for the immediate implementation of a no-fly zone over his country and asked the Assembly to set in motion an international war crimes tribunal to investigate and punish those responsible for war crimes. He also urged the international community to lift the arms embargo which he said had deprived Bosnia and Herzegovina of its only effective means of self defense and by doing so had helped its aggressor.

The Bosnian President outlined details of his proposal for a constitutional commission which would work with a group of international experts to develop a constitutional settlement to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said he envisioned a Republic consisting of administrative-territorial regions formed according to economic, cultural and ethnic criteria and stressed his belief that "it was impractical and immoral" to institute such regions on an exclusively ethnic basis.

In her statement to the Assembly, Ms. Danielle de St.Jorre, Minister of Environment, Planning and External Relations of the Seychelles, stressed that while 15 per cent of the world population living in the rich countries controled over 80 per cent of the world income, over three billion people had only 5 per cent of that total amount available to them.

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She called on the developed nations to increase their economic and technical assistance to the poor countries. While solidarity between nations should be strengthened and developing countries assisted, she said, each country should do its utmost for its own development. She called on the industrialized world to provide increased technical aid, expertise and technological assistance - with no limitation or exception - to the needy nations.

"Burden-sharing" was essential with regard to United Nations peace-keeping efforts, Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway told the Assembly today. She stressed that every country had a duty to participate, including those which had refrained from getting involved so far.

She recalled that some 35,000 Norwegian men and women had participated in a total of 16 United Nations peace-keeping operations and said that her country was prepared to intensify its efforts in this field. In connection with the need to move beyond traditional peace-keeping into such fields as refugee repatriation, electoral assistance or human rights monitoring, she recalled Norway's proposal to establish a special United Nations institute for education and training in peace-keeping and related activities.

The Norwegian Prime Minister said it was "a sad paradox" that development aid flows continued to stagnate and remained at less than half of the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Norway's official development aid, however, which had exceeded 1 per cent of its GDP for more than 10 years, reflected its strong commitment to the fight against poverty, she said.

The Foreign Minister of Iran, Ali-Akbar Velayati, expressed satisfaction at the victory of the Muslim Mujaheedin of Afghanistan and drew attention of the international community to the pressing humanitarian needs of the war-stricken Afghan people. With regard to Nagorno-Karabakh, he said the crisis in that region could only be resolved through negotiations and on the basis of mutual respect and non-interference as well as preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The Iranian Foreign Minister further stated that his Government was fully prepared to actively participate in any constructive and comprehensive initiative in the field of the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

Speaking about the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Foreign Minister Velayati emphasized the inherent right of that Republic to self-defense and urged the Security Council to reconsider its resolutions on arms embargo against Yugoslavia.

He went on to say that the decision of the recent Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta to convene a high-level working group to study ways and means of increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations represented a "timely,

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logical and positive step" He proposed that the General Assembly guide other organs of the United Nations on a constant and active basis in order to increase the effectiveness of the Organization.

Speaking on the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction to the Assembly today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Paavo Vayrynen, called for the strengthening of international norms of non-proliferation and welcomed the recently concluded Chemical Weapons Convention, saying it was a vital and long-awaited part of the non-proliferation regime. He also asserted that his country would be among the first States to sign and ratify the Convention.

Mr. Vayrynen said the unrestrained proliferation of conventional arms could lead to regional instability and called on the major arms-exporting countries exercise restraint and to report fully all relevant transfers to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

With today's unprecedented demands on the United Nations, and the many new challenges to be met and financed -- including recently expanded peace-keeping operations--there was an acute need for funds, he said. He expressed concern about the Organization's ability to function in the present financial crisis and said his country "was particularly anxious" to see the General Assembly take the first step towards the establishment of a peace-keeping reserve fund to meet the initial expenses of peace-keeping operations pending assessed contributions, as recommended by the Secretary-General and long-advocated by the Nordic countries.

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The Security Council has recommended that the General Assembly decide that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) shall not participate in the work of the Assembly and should apply for membership to the United Nations. It considered that the Federal Republic could not automatically continue the membership of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the Organization.

The Council took that action at a formal meeting on Saturday, 19 September, by a vote of 12 in favour to none against, with 3 abstentions (China, India and Zimbabwe).

Speaking in explanation of vote, the representative of Zimbabwe said that the Charter did not stipulate resolving matters of succession as a precondition for membership, and that the Charter's provisions were consistently ignored or selectively applied by the Council. The representative of India said the Assembly was under no legal obligation to act on any recommendation of the Council, just as the Council had no obligation to act on the recommendations of the Assembly. The resclution was flawed since it did not conform to the provisions of the Charter that dealt with the membership, he noted.

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The representative of China said that the resolution did not mean that the Federal Republic would no longer participate in the activities of the United Nations. This was only a transitional arrangement and affected only its participation in the work of the General Assembly.

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The leaders of the three parties in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina signed agreements in Geneva on 19 September assuring the United Nations High Commissioner (UNHCR) of the security of humanitarian operations throughout the region, the UNHCR has said. The Yugoslav parties thus reaffirmed the commitments made at the recent International Conference on the former Yugoslavia in London.

In a press communiqué issued over the weekend, the UNHCR said that upon receipt of those assurances, which cover both land and air operations by UNHCR and its partners, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, recommended to participating Governments the immediate resumption of the humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo. The airlifts, coordinated by UNCHR and the United Nations Protection Forces in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), were suspended on 3 September after the downing of an Italian cargo plane on its approach to Sarajevo.

The Secretary-General's Spokesman said today that the first UNPROFOR flight since the suspension of the humanitarian operations landed this morning in Sarajevo, where the conditions were reported as "calm".

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The electoral technical assistance programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Angola lost a second helicopter in a week when it crashed on Saturday, 19 September, after take-off for a town located in the north.

According to a statement issued on Saturday by the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II), six people -- four Russian crew members, one American electoral observer from UNAVEM II and one Angolan UNDP staff member -- were on board the helicopter when it crashed from an altitude of 600 feet, but there were no fatalities. The three most seriously injured victims were taken to a hospital in Windhoek, Namibia. The others were being treated in a hospital in Luanda.

Nine people had been injured in a similar accident on 14 September .

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Following an extraordinary session of the European Community's General Affairs Council at Headquarters today, the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom, Douglas Hurd, announced at a press conference that the Council of the 12-member European Community warmly welcomed the positive result of the French referendum held Sunday endorsing the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union.

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The British Foreign Minister said the Council also welcomed the decision to convene an early, special European Council summit meeting on 5 October to discuss two topics: turbulence in the monetary markets, and preoccupations arising from anxiety that the European Community had drifted out of touch with its own citizens. Mr. Hurd stressed the flexibility of the Treaty, which will go into effect either on 1 January or on the first day of the month following the last ratificaton. Great Britain, he said, would debate the Treaty through its parliamentary procedures.

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Communications received "from the so-called Haitian Government in Port-au-Prince included purported credentials for a delegation to the 47th session of the General Assembly", according to a statement issued by a United Nations Spokesman today.

The statement cited a General Assembly resolution adopted on 11 October 1991, by which the Assembly affirmed as "unacceptable any entity resulting from the attempted illegal replacement of the constitutional President of Haiti" and demanded the immediate restoration of the legitimate Government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. According to the statement, the purported credentials from the "so-called" Government of Haiti in Port-au-Prince "are not receivable from the legal point of view and are of no legal consequence to the United Nations".

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High-level governmental representatives, including 17 ministers from 90 member States of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), are meeting in Vienna this week for the thirty-sixth regular session of the General Conference. The Conference is scheduled to last through 25 September.

Among the items that the delegates are expected to approve are the Agency's 1993 regular budget, which calls for total expenditure of $191 million. The Conference will also consider a number of items relating to measures to strengthen international cooperation in the field of nuclear safety and radiological protection; the application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East; Israeli nuclear capabilities and threat; Iraq's non-compliance with its safeguard obligations; South Africa's nuclear capabilities; and strengthening of the safeguards system.

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